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ABSTRACT

A study of 130 regular and special education teachers assessed teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom and toward co-teaching and collaborative planning to meet the instructional needs of students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Analyses of the findings reveal a strong positive teacher attitude toward inclusive placement of special education and regular education students within the same classroom. The teachers believed both types of students would benefit socially from this type of placement, but have reservations about meeting instructional needs of students with disabilities. The survey found the teachers believe that they lack knowledge of co-teaching and should receive inservice training if co-teaching is to be successful. Results also show that teachers with adequate knowledge of co-teaching foresaw more favorable results for students with disabilities in the regular classroom. Teachers with less teaching experience saw collegiality as a means to improve teaching skills and viewed co-planning as more difficult than did the teachers with more experience. Junior high and high school teachers demonstrated stronger opinions, both positive and negative, toward co-teaching and inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classroom than elementary teachers. (Contains 70 references.) (CR)

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ED 408 754

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUDED SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AND CO-TEACHING

Bruce A. Bergren

Education has undergone many evolutions. Free public education for all youngsters has been interpreted in various ways depending upon social, economic, and physical conditions. As late as the 1950's there were few allowances made for individual differences in learning abilities. Teachers taught the lesson to the large heterogeneous group. Those who were able to pass the tests were sent on to the next grade. Those who failed were held back, sometimes more than once in the same grade. In the 1960's, federal title programs for education began to take effect, providing funding for specialists in remedial reading and math. At the time, universities were offering courses in special education to train teachers with alternate strategies for students who were unable to succeed. By the end of the 1960s, in parallel with the civil rights movement, placement of students in special classes was criticized. Critics of special education questioned whether 'separate but equal' was appropriate. The Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142), mandated that students with disabilities be educated in a least restrictive environment. Schools and teachers assumed new and expanding roles (Kohler & Rusch, 1995).

Most school districts developed a continuum of special services to provide integration of special education students into the regular classroom (Madden & Slavin, 1983). This continuum addressed the need to individualize services and allow the special student instruction in a regular education classroom. Each student received a prescription to provide a variety of program options such as: special class, resource room, in-class assistance, specialized services, and teacher consultation. The resource room became the most commonly-used support for mildly handicapped students.

Today many school districts are moving in the direction of integrating all students into the regular education classroom. This trend in school reform is an alternative to self contained instruction and pull out remediation. The motive for change is driven by the benefits a diverse school population will receive. Consistent with the intent of the Education for All Handicapped Act of 1975, handicapped students are returning to the regular classroom for instruction. Published literature on inclusion shows increased recommendations to reintegrate special education students into the regular classroom. This change brings about the importance of collaboration among professionals, and cooperative teaching inside the classroom. The primary platform for inclusive education is collaboration and co-teaching. A teaching team consisting of subject specialist and teaching strategist has great potential for meeting the needs of all students. The importance of teacher training, administrative support, and attitudes toward student achievement may influence the success or failure of inclusive education.

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B. Bergren

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Changes our nation faces as we grow into the twenty-first century are parallel to the growing concerns in education. Some suggest that the current approach to education should be updated. Many believe that school reform is necessary to produce a society of workers who are qualified for the job market in the year 2000. National-level demographic changes in the job market, family make up, and social economic status bring a new student profile into our schools. While numbers of students with disabilities have increased significantly, current programs and procedures that identify handicapped youngsters are not solving the problem. Most recent reform movements in special education advocate less isolation and more inclusion, thus reducing self-contained classrooms by teaching all students in the regular classroom. Most recent law governing special education states that school districts are to promote and carry out the Regular Education Initiative (REI) through a merger between special education and regular education. (Davis, 1989; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994; Lerner, 1993; Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989).

There is an absence of research and empirical evidence to support programs accommodating students with special needs in the regular classroom (Anderegg & Vergason, 1988; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Zigmond & Baker, 1990).

In spite of lack of overwhelming supportive evidence, educational leaders are encouraging schools to move away from a one teacher, one classroom system to adopt a team approach (Bauwens, Hourcade, & Friend, 1989; Davis, 1989; Johnson & Johnson 1989).

Many reform leaders agree that inclusion is effective (Houck & Rogers, 1994; Wang & Reynolds, 1995). School districts are now planning how best to utilize future financial and personnel resources. These survey results should enlighten planners as to attitudes of educators regarding co-teaching and inclusion, providing a framework for communication among educators. This survey of teacher attitudes about special education and co-teaching provides useful information for educators as they improve instruction for students.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether teacher attitudes toward the included special education student learners affect attitudes toward co-teaching.

Questions of the Study

1. What are teacher opinions concerning factors of effective co-teaching as suggested in current research?
2. Does teacher knowledge of the co-teaching model of instruction impact their attitude toward co-teaching?
3. Does years of teaching experience influence attitudes toward co-teaching?
4. Does number of hours of college special education training have an effect on their attitude toward the co-teaching model?
5. Does the grade level of teacher assignment impact attitudes toward co-teaching?

Procedures

Population and Sample

The population of this study included 150 regular and special education teachers employed full time during the Spring semester of the 1996-97 school year at Homewood and Flossmoor elementary and junior high schools, and Homewood-Flossmoor High School. The sample consisted of white males, white females, black males, and black females with one to thirty years of teaching experience.

The population and sample were administered a locally constructed Teacher Attitudes Survey distributed through the interschool mail with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study and containing instructions for completing and returning the survey. A locally constructed Teacher Attitudes Survey was designed based on significant issues identified through review of recent studies on teaching practices of students with special needs. The instrument was pilot-tested by 15 members of the population who were not included in the study.

The results were tabulated in terms of percentages of response as agree, disagree, and no opinion. Results were analyzed to determine the attitudes of teachers toward included special education students and co-teaching. The Chi Square was used to determine statistical significance of the response at the .05 level of confidence.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to evaluate teacher attitudes toward the inclusion of special education students in the regular classroom and to assess teacher attitudes toward co-teaching and collaborative planning to meet the instructional needs of handicapped students in the regular classroom.

One hundred fifty respondents returned the questionnaire.

DEMOGRAPHICS TABLE

	Number of Responses			
Information About the Teacher	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
1. Current Teaching Position	16	133	1	
2. Number of years teaching	21	21	20	88
3. Special education training	84	26	9	30
Information About the Teaching Position				
4. Grades taught	52	21	26	51
5. Number of special students	69	53	10	13
6. Instructional Support	11	6	93	10
7. IEP Goals and objectives	46	47	36	10
8. Administration Support	15	18	2	92
9. Use of Co-teaching	21	41	43	24

Regular and special education teachers, representing grades K-12, responded to the questionnaire. Years of teaching experience were from one to more than sixteen. Special education training completed by respondents were from three to more than twenty-one hours. Eighty-four of the respondents had completed six hours or less of special education training.

Twenty-one teachers had five years or less of teaching experience, while eighty-eight had taught sixteen years or more. Seventy-seven of the respondents were teachers of grades eight through twelve. Eighty-three were grade k-5 teachers. A classroom aide is provided to 93 teachers on as as-needed basis while seventeen reported that they are provided an aide when 4-9 special education students are placed in their classroom.

Two teachers indicated that they had regularly-scheduled inservice time; fifteen teachers had released time for collaboration, while 92 reported that they collaborated with another teacher before and after school.

The data were analyzed according to the five general questions and the independent variables. The findings were tabulated as percentages, and the Chi-square test was employed to determine the statistical significance of the responses at the .05 level of confidence.

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION "WHAT ARE TEACHER OPINIONS CONCERNING FACTORS OF EFFECTIVE CO-TEACHING AS SUGGESTED IN CURRENT RESEARCH?"

Teacher Attitudes about Including Special Students in the Regular Classroom	N=150 Percentage		
	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
10. Special education students learn no differently than non handicapped.	10%	86% *	2%
11. More time is spent teaching a special ed student than a non special ed student.	73% *	15%	7%
12. Special ed students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.	75% *	9%	13%
13. It is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.	87% *	7%	3%
14. Modified assignments for special education students are difficult to justify to other students in class.	32%	55% *	11%
15. I have adequate training to modify instruction to accommodate special ed students.	45%	46% *	7%
16. Equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular ed classroom.	47% *	34%	14%
17. Adequate information is available to the classroom teacher about mainstreamed special education students.	38%	52% *	8%
18. "Pull-out" resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.	70% *	15%	13%
19. "Pull-out" resource appointments make extra work for the classroom teacher.	38%	41% *	19%
20. "Pull-out" resource appointments are best way of accommodating a special ed student's learning problem.	31%	26%	39%

Teacher Attitudes about Co-teaching			
21. I have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model.	30%	63% *	6%
22. Co-teaching benefits my students.	47% *	5%	43%
23. I am interested in learning more about co-teaching.	70% *	12%	17%
24. Co-teaching increases communication and improves instruction in my classroom.	45%	5%	47% *
25. Co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special ed labels.	46% *	13%	38%
26. Non special education students would benefit from co-teaching.	60% *	5%	27%
27. I have improved my teaching through collegiality with a teacher who has different skills from mine.	52% *	9%	31%
28. Inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.	83% *	5%	11%
29. Daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching.	58% *	9%	30%
30. I understand my delegated responsibilities in a co-teaching model.	25%	20%	51% *
31.My teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.	49% *	12%	36%

* Significant at the.05 level of confidence.

First general question summary:

The first general question attempted to determine teachers' attitudes about including special education students in the regular classroom. A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of teachers disagreed that special education students learn no differently than non handicapped students. Also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) were their opinions that more time is spent teaching a special education student and that it is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of teachers believed that special education students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom and that equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular classroom. It was also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) that these respondents thought that pull-out resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.

A majority of teachers believed that special education students learn differently than non special ed students, that they require more teaching time, and that it is necessary to modify instruction for them. They believed that special education students benefit from co-teaching.

A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of the teachers believed that their knowledge of co-teaching is inadequate, but they are interested in learning more about it. They also believe that co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special education labels. A significant (at the .05 level of confidence) number of teachers indicated that they had no opinion about the co-teaching model.

It was also significant (at the .05 level of confidence) that teachers believed their teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities, that daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching, and that inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.

TABLE II

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION "DOES TEACHER KNOWLEDGE OF THE CO-TEACHING MODEL OF INSTRUCTION IMPACT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD CO-TEACHING?"

	N=45 ADEQUATE			N=94 INADEQUATE		
Statement	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion §
10. Special education students learn no differently than non handicapped.	11%	87% #	2%	10%	87% #	1%
11. More time is spent teaching a special ed student than a non special ed student.	76% #	16%	9%	77% #	14%	4%
12. Special ed students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.	76% #	16%	4%	74% #	6%	16%
13. It is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.	91% #	7%	0%	88% #	6%	3%
14. Modified assignments for special education students are difficult to justify to other students in class.	33%	62% *	4%	32%	52% *	13%
15. I have adequate training to modify instruction to accommodate special ed students.	78% *	22%	0%	29%	62% *	7%
16. Equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular ed classroom.	60% #	33%	4%	44% #	35%	18%
17. Adequate information is available to the classroom teacher about mainstreamed special education students.	44%	44% #	11%	31%	60% #	7%
18. "Pull-out" resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.	80% *	11%	9%	66% *	17%	15%
19. "Pull-out" resource appointments make extra work for the classroom teacher.	80% #	11%	9%	40% #	34%	23%
20. "Pull-out" resource appointments are best way of accommodating a special ed student's learning problem.	42%	27%	31%	23%	27%	45%
21. I have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model.	100% #	0%	0%	0%	100% #	0%
22. Co-teaching benefits my students.	78% *	2%	18%	36%	6%	53% *
23. I am interested in learning more about co-teaching.	71% #	18%	11%	76% #	9%	16%
24. Co-teaching increases communication and improves instruction in my classroom.	80% *	0%	20%	31%	6%	59% *
25. Co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special ed labels.	67% *	7%	27%	39%	14%	44% *
26. Non special education students would benefit from co-teaching.	80% *	2%	9%	55% *	5%	34%
27. I have improved my teaching through collegiality with a teacher who has different skills from mine.	80% #	2%	9%	43% #	11%	40%
28. Inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.	78% #	9%	13%	91% #	2%	6%
29. Daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching.	97% *	13%	20%	57% *	6%	34%
30. I understand my delegated responsibilities in a co-teaching model.	53% #	13%	22%	9%	24%	63% #
31.My teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.	60% *	9%	29%	46% *	13%	39%

* Significant at .05 level of confidence within each independent variable.

\# Significant at .05 level of confidence between the two independent variables.

§ Significant at .05 level of confidence between the No Opinion responses.

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Second general question summary:

The second general question addressed how teacher knowledge of the co-teaching model of instruction impacts their attitude toward co-teaching. There is a consistency among all respondents at a high rate of agreement.

The second general question compared the statement responses of teachers who have knowledge of the co-teaching model with the respondents who did not have knowledge of co-teaching. Both groups demonstrated significant Agree responses to questions thirteen, twenty-three, and twenty eight. This suggests that both teacher groups view special education students as having needs that are different than regular education students.

Question twenty-eight suggests that teachers would like to learn new ideas for teaching special education students. Teachers with inadequate knowledge of the co-teaching model responded significantly (at the .05 level of confidence) with No Opinion to many statements. Questions nineteen, twenty, twenty-seven, and thirty show the highest percent of No Opinion, suggesting that those who perceive lack of knowledge of the co-teaching model may not have an opinion as to lack of knowledge.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION
"DOES YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE INFLUENCE
ATTITUDES TOWARD CO-TEACHING?"

Statement	N=88 OVER 16 YRS			N=62 16 YRS & UNDER		
	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
10. Special education students learn no differently than non handicapped.	12%	85% *	3%	8%	92% *	0%
11. More time is spent teaching a special ed student than a non special ed student.	73% *	16%	11%	80% *	16%	3%
12. Special ed students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.	76% *	5%	19%	80% *	15%	5%
13. It is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.	92% #	6%	2%	89% #	8%	3%
14. Modified assignments for special education students are difficult to justify to other students in class.	31%	61% #	8%	36%	49% #	15%
15. I have adequate training to modify instruction to accommodate special ed students.	47% *	45%	8%	46%	49% *	5%
16. Equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular ed classroom.	51% *	33%	16%	48% *	39%	13%
17. Adequate information is available to the classroom teacher about mainstreamed special education students.	40%	52% *	8%	38%	54% *	8%
18. "Pull-out" resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.	69% *	15%	16%	75% *	5%	10%
19. "Pull-out" resource appointments make extra work for the classroom teacher.	40% *	41%	20%	38%	43% *	20%
20. "Pull-out" resource appointments are best way of accommodating a special ed student's learning problem.	30%	32%	38%	37%	20%	43%
21. I have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model.	26%	66% *	8%	36%	61% *	3%
22. Co-teaching benefits my students.	39%	6%	55% *	63% *	5%	32%
23. I am interested in learning more about co-teaching.	69% *	15%	16%	74% *	8%	18%
24. Co-teaching increases communication and improves instruction in my classroom.	38%	5%	57% *	58% *	5%	37%
25. Co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special ed labels.	41%	16%	42% *	57% *	8%	35%
26. Non special education students would benefit from co-teaching.	63% *	6%	30%	67% *	5%	28%
27. I have improved my teaching through collegiality with a teacher who has different skills from mine.	48% #	11%	41%	70% #	7%	23%
28. Inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.	80% *	8%	11%	89% *	2%	10%
29. Daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching.	62% #	7%	31%	57% #	13%	30%
30. I understand my delegated responsibilities in a co-teaching model.	20%	20%	60% #	33%	32%	45% #
31.My teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.	43% *	14%	43%	61% *	10%	30%

* Significant at .05 level of confidence within each independent variable.
\# Significant at .05 level of confidence between the two independent variables.

Both groups of teachers agreed that it is necessary to modify instruction for special ed students. In contrast to less experienced teachers, those with more years of teaching experience thought that it was not difficult to justify to the other students in class that special ed students received modified assignments.

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Third general question summary:

The third general question was asked to determine whether or not years of teaching experience influenced teachers' attitudes toward co-teaching. A comparison between responses for years of teaching experience shows five statements significant (.05 level of confidence). This suggests that years of teaching experience have little impact on attitudes toward including special needs students in the regular classroom.

Two statements of significance (.05 level) are concerned with modified instruction. Although both groups agree that it is necessary to modify instruction, teachers with less experience find it more difficult to justify modifications to non special education students.

The remaining statements of significance appear closely aligned with working together in collegiality. Teachers with less experience appear to value collegiality more than teachers with more experience.

TABLE IV

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION "DOES NUMBER OF HOURS OF COLLEGE SPECIAL EDUCATION TRAINING HAVE AN EFFECT ON THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD CO-TEACHING ?"

Statement	N=55 MORE THAN 6 Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	N=84 6 HOURS OR LESS Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
10. Special education students learn no differently than non handicapped.	8%	92% *	0%	12%	84% *	4%
11. More time is spent teaching a special ed student than a non special ed student.	75% *	19%	6%	77% *	14%	6%
12. Special ed students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.	78% *	11%	11%	78% *	8%	15%
13. It is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.	95% *	3%	2%	86% #	10%	4%
14. Modified assignments for special education students are difficult to justify to other students in class.	20%	71% *	9%	43%	44% #	12%
15. I have adequate training to modify instruction to accommodate special ed students.	68% *	26%	6%	28%	64% *	7%
16. Equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular ed classroom.	55% *	31%	14%	45% *	40%	15%
17. Adequate information is available to the classroom teacher about mainstreamed special education students.	36%	53% *	11%	41%	53% *	6%
18. "Pull-out" resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.	80% #	9%	11%	64% #	20%	16%
19. "Pull-out" resource appointments make extra work for the classroom teacher.	35%	45% *	20%	42% *	38%	20%
20. "Pull-out" resource appointments are best way of accommodating a special ed student's learning problem.	38%	25%	37%	29%	29%	42%
21. I have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model.	44%	51% #	5%	19%	73% #	7%
22. Co-teaching benefits my students.	54% *	5%	41%	45%	6%	49% *
23. I am interested in learning more about co-teaching.	72% *	11%	17%	70% *	13%	17%
24. Co-teaching increases communication and improves instruction in my classroom.	52% *	3%	44%	42%	6%	52% *
25. Co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special ed labels.	56% *	11%	33%	41%	15%	44% *
26. Non special education students would benefit from co-teaching.	77% #	2%	21%	55% #	9%	35%
27. I have improved my teaching through collegiality with a teacher who has different skills from mine.	63% *	12%	25%	52% *	8%	40%
28. Inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.	83% #	8%	9%	84% #	4%	12%
29. Daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching.	59% *	13%	28%	60% *	7%	33%
30. I understand my delegated responsibilities in a co-teaching model.	32% *	17%	31%	21%	23%	56% *
31.My teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.	47% *	13%	40%	53% *	12%	35%

* Significant at .05 level of confidence within each independent variable

\# Significant at .05 level of confidence between the two independent variables

Teachers with more than six hours of special ed training indicated that it is not difficult to justify modified assignments for special ed students to other students in class. Teachers with fewer than six hours of special ed training were more unsure if non special ed students could benefit from co-teaching. Both groups believed that inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to be successful.

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Fourth general question summary:

Response to the fourth general question identified few statements with significance at the .05 level of confidence. Teachers with more special education training disagreed significantly (.05 level of confidence) with statement fourteen. This suggests that teachers with special education training have the knowledge to explain learning differences to students in their classroom.

Knowledgeable teachers appear to view pull-out resource as necessary for special needs students to compensate for learning deficits. Teachers have a significant (.05 level) knowledge of the co-teaching model of instruction when they have more special education training.

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES TO QUESTION
"DOES THE GRADE LEVEL OF TEACHER ASSIGNMENT IMPACT
ATTITUDES TOWARD CO-TEACHING?"

Statement	N=73 GRADES 6/12			N=77 GRADES K/5		
	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
10. Special education students learn no differently than non handicapped.	7%	93% #	0%	14%	82% #	4%
11. More time is spent teaching a special ed student than a non special ed student.	81% #	14%	4%	71% #	18%	11%
12. Special ed students benefit from instruction in the regular classroom.	76% *	10%	14%	79% *	8%	12%
13. It is necessary to modify instruction for special education students.	99% #	1%	0%	82% #	12%	5%
14. Modified assignments for special education students are difficult to justify to other students in class.	19%	73% #	8%	47% #	40%	13%
15. I have adequate training to modify instruction to accommodate special ed students.	59% *	36%	5%	34%	58% *	8%
16. Equal learning opportunities are available for students with special needs in the regular ed classroom.	55% *	32%	13%	44% *	40%	16%
17. Adequate information is available to the classroom teacher about mainstreamed special education students.	37%	58% *	5%	41%	48% *	11%
18. "Pull-out" resource appointments help special needs students compensate for their handicap.	90% #	4%	5%	53% #	26%	21%
19. "Pull-out" resource appointments make extra work for the classroom teacher.	26%	62% #	12%	51% #	22%	27%
20. "Pull-out" resource appointments are best way of accommodating a special ed student's learning problem.	48%	16%	36%	18%	38%	44%
21. I have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model.	38%	59% *	3%	23%	58% *	9%
22. Co-teaching benefits my students.	61% *	4%	34%	37%	7%	56% *
23. I am interested in learning more about co-teaching.	82% #	7%	11%	60% #	17%	23%
24. Co-teaching increases communication and improves instruction in my classroom.	53%	4%	43%	40%	6%	54%
25. Co-teaching reduces the stigma associated with special ed labels.	51%	13%	36%	44%	14%	42%
26. Non special education students would benefit from co-teaching.	75% *	3%	22%	56% *	8%	36%
27. I have improved my teaching through collegiality with a teacher who has different skills from mine.	71% *	11%	18%	43%	8%	49% #
28. Inservice training is necessary for co-teaching to work.	86% *	8%	5%	81% *	3%	16%
29. Daily planning is difficult to coordinate with co-teaching.	61% *	15%	24%	58% *	4%	38%
30. I understand my delegated responsibilities in a co-teaching model.	29%	19%	51% *	22%	22%	56%
31. My teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.	54% #	7%	39%	46% *	18%	36%

* Significant at .05 level of confidence within each independent variable.
\# Significant at .05 level of confidence between the two independent variables.

Upper grade teachers believed resource room assistance helps special ed students cooperate. Elementary teachers affirmed this, but at a lesser rate. Both groups indicated a high rate of interest in learning more about co-teaching.

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Fifth general question summary:

Upper grade teachers responded significantly between responses on ten of the twenty-one statements of the survey. Lower grade teachers agreed at a 52% response, while the upper grade teachers agreed at a 90% response rate. This suggests that pull-out resource assistance is valued to a greater degree by junior high and high school teachers as a compensatory form of instruction than by elementary grade teachers.

Junior high and senior high teachers are interested in learning more about the co-teaching model of instruction and agree significantly (.05 level) that teaching improves through collegiality. Junior high and senior high teachers also responded at a percent majority when asked if their teaching style is compatible with shared teaching responsibilities.

Another significant response between junior/senior high teachers and elementary teachers indicated that upper grade teachers are favorable toward learning more about the co-teaching model of instruction.

Summary

Overall, the data appear to agree with attitudes and opinions identified in the review of the literature. Teacher opinions on special education student abilities while receiving regular education instruction profiled students who learn differently, students who benefit from modified instruction, and students who require pull-out remediation to compensate for handicaps (Houck & Rogers, 1994). Teachers saw these youngsters to be in need of more time for instruction than their non-special education peers. They agreed, however, that the special child benefits from regular class placement.

Results from this study are similar to earlier research on the implications of inclusion programs in that teachers find it necessary to modify instruction, yet do not feel that they have adequate training (Bender, Vail, & Scott, 1995). Issues associated with instruction modification also depend upon the content of instruction and the grade level. Evidenced in this study, teachers at the 6-12 grade level were in overwhelming agreement that instruction modification is necessary. Teachers with more special education training showed more favorable opinions about their ability to modify instruction (Ayres & Meyer, 1992).

Teacher opinions also expressed that handicapped students benefit from pull-out remediation to compensate for their disabilities. This attitude toward pull-out remediation should be noted in parallel with teacher opinion as to the lack of adequate information about the handicapped student.

The literature showed that collaboration between special education teacher and regular education teacher during pull-out remediation is time limited and scheduled infrequently (Myers, Gelzheiser, & Yelich, 1991). These opinions are highly correlated, as suggested in previous studies.

Teachers' opinions are not as strong in regard to the learning opportunities available to these special students. Teacher training to modify instruction and the availability of student information to teachers are two areas where opinions vary more widely (Burswicki et al, 1995 and Mcintosh et al, 1993).

A small percentage of teachers surveyed indicated adequate knowledge of strategies for teaching special education. A large percentage of the sample would like more information and also agreed that inservice training is necessary for a successful co-teaching experience.

Studies of future trends suggest that the inclusion of handicapped students in the general education classroom will increase and continue into the 21st century (Putnam, Speigel, & Bruininks, 1995). Opinions of all teachers in this study conclusively agree that inservice training is necessary for successful co-teaching. The percent rate who agree that training is necessary is even greater for teachers who felt that they did not have adequate knowledge of the co-teaching model. This result is consistent with results of previous studies (Ayers & Meyer, 1992).

Responses from teachers with adequate knowledge of co-teaching indicated a more favorable opinion of collegiality and teacher responsibilities. This finding is reinforced by previous studies in which teachers who shared instructional responsibilities reported that they enjoyed and benefited from collegial exchanges of strategies to improve learning opportunities for students (Banerji & Baily, 1995).

Conclusions

Analysis of the findings reveal a strong positive teacher attitude toward inclusive placement of special education and regular education students within the same classroom. They believe both types of students would benefit socially from this placement, but have reservations about meeting instructional needs of the special education student.

Many advocates of inclusion have proposed a co-teaching model of instruction (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1989). Teachers believe they lack knowledge of co-teaching and should receive inservice training if co-teaching is to be successful. The significance of general question 2 of the study, perceived knowledge of co-teaching, suggests that teachers with adequate knowledge foresee more favorable results for special needs students in the regular classroom than do those teachers without the knowledge.

Teachers believe they can improve their teaching through collegiality and a higher understanding of responsibilities, and they view the pull-out resource appointment as extra work for them. This response is consistent with results identified in the literature (Jobe, Rust, & Brisse, 1996) and Bursuick et al, 1995).

Response items associated with co-teaching from the study question asking about the influence of years of teaching experience toward co-teaching suggest that teachers with less experience saw collegiality as a means to improve teaching skills. They also viewed co-planning as more difficult than do teachers with more experience.

College training appeared to influence attitudes associated with justifying modified assignments to non handicapped students and increased knowledge of co-teaching. Teachers with more college training were able to recognize the benefits of co-teaching for non special education students.

Teaching position affects attitudes of co-teaching. Junior high and high school teachers demonstrated stronger opinions, both positive and negative, toward co-teaching and inclusion of special education students in the regular classroom. Elementary teachers appeared to reserve opinion more often than did the upper grade teachers.

Implications

The REI (Regular Education Initiative) evolved as a concept based on little empirical data and merely an analysis of past practices (Will, 1996). Experts called for empirical data to substantiate the efficacy of the initiative (Zigmund & Baker, 1990).

General question number one asked teachers their opinions of special education students in the classroom. Results of the study are consistent with the literature. Results of the study imply that teachers are willing to learn more about co-teaching and that inservice training is necessary for successful co-teaching to occur. The No Opinion responses to some of the co-teaching items suggest that as knowledge and inservice training on co-teaching become more available opinions will develop as to co-teaching's instructional effectiveness.

Through comparison of survey results from teachers who demonstrate a knowledge of co-teaching, favorable student benefits exist. Teachers see equal learning opportunities for special education students in the regular classroom and feel more informed about specialized needs students when they are being instructed in the regular classroom.

Other implications for teachers' professional development suggest that teachers with adequate knowledge of co-teaching improve teaching skills through collegiality and have clearer expectations of teaching responsibilities.

Teachers in the junior high and high school show a higher opinion rate either positively or negatively toward co-teaching. This suggests that upper grade teachers are more decisive in their responses and that their attitudes are more established. This could be due to the fact that upper grade level teacher training is specialized as opposed to a generalized teacher training received by elementary teachers.

The co-teaching model of instruction is a relatively new idea; limited empirical data is available to assess its efficacy. As schools increase implementations of this model, more research will become available to address its success and areas for improvement.

Since this is an empirically-based descriptive study on the topic, analysis is a broad overview of the topic. Survey statements would have provided greater significance and more detailed data if the topic had been more narrowly addressed either as the co-teaching model or included students, but not both.

Teacher opinions were based upon how they interpreted the questions. Interpretation may or may not have been the same for all teachers who responded. Finally, the teachers who volunteered may or may not have been representative of the whole teacher population. The combined topic does not provide detailed data which is necessary for interpretation.

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